



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Pacific Southwest Region  
Stanislaus National Forest

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**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** March 14, 2019

**Subject:** North Merced Prescribed Burn Project, Scoping Document

**To:** Schedule of Proposed Action (SOPA) Respondents and Other Interested Individuals, Organizations, and Agencies

Dear Interested Party:

The Stanislaus National Forest is initiating scoping for the North Merced Prescribed Burn project. The proposed project is located in Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties on the Groveland Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest (T2S R18E Sec. 13, 24, 25; T2S R19E Sec. 15-22, 25-36; T2S R20E Sec. 30; and T3S R19E Sec. 2-6). Refer to the Schedule of Proposed Action (SOPA) for a map of the project area: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55562>

The North Merced Prescribed Burn project is being proposed to address the potential for largescale high intensity fire within the project area. The primary objectives are to increase the resiliency of forested wildlife habitat and to improve the quality of deer forage and movement corridors.

To accomplish this, the project would allow prescribed burning on up to 12,000 acres of forest and brush habitat. The proposed project is largely within the footprint of the 2018 Ferguson Fire, providing a good opportunity to maintain fuel loads and to utilize existing containment lines. Burn strategy would be site specific based on fuel conditions and maximizing benefits to wildlife habitat. It is anticipated that not all acres will need to be treated under this project, and some acres will need multiple treatments to meet desired objectives.

Prescribed fire preparation may include; falling trees for firefighter safety or burn strategy, piling hazardous fuels, and maintaining or constructing control lines. Utility Task Vehicles (UTV's), chainsaws, and hand tools may be used to support site preparation and prescribed burning activities. Hand tools or heavy equipment (dozers or excavators) may be used to maintain or construct control lines. Prescribed burns would be ignited by aircraft or using hand tools and would comply with all applicable Air Pollution Control District and Title 17 Smoke Management Program provisions.

The actions proposed in the North Merced Prescribed Burn project fall into a category that may be excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as long as analysis determines that no extraordinary circumstances [36 CFR 220.6(b)] exist: Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road



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construction [36 CFR 220.6(e) (6)]. I expect to complete and sign a Decision Memo by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

You are receiving this notice either because you expressed a specific interest in this project, or because I believe you may be directly or indirectly affected by this project. Additionally, the intent of the Forest in scoping this project is to engage in a transparent and inclusive collaborative planning process that includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests. As such, we request that you review the scoping package and share either your suggestions or endorsement of the actions by April 15, 2019.

A scoping package that provides information related to the proposed action, the scoping process and how to submit comments is available online at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55562> or at the Stanislaus National Forest Headquarters, 19777 Greenley Road, Sonora, CA 95370.

For additional information regarding this project, please contact Ryan Kalinowski at the Stanislaus National Forest Headquarters, or call 209-288-6323, or email [ryan.kalinowski@usda.gov](mailto:ryan.kalinowski@usda.gov).

Thank you for your interest and participation in the environmental analysis process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Junette", with a stylized, flowing script.

Jim Junette  
Groveland District Ranger